

CANADIAN STAGE ANNOUNCES THE FALL PROGRAMMING FOR ITS REIMAGINED 20.21 SEASON AND SHARES ITS PANDEMIC RESPONSE PLAN

TORONTO, SEPTEMBER 3, 2020: Canadian Stage is pleased to announce details of its plan to safeguard the vitality of the performing arts during this challenging time. The plan includes Canadian Stage's Fall Program of works by local, national, and international artists, significant financial investments that will go directly into the hands of artists to foster artistic innovation, increased support of community-focused initiatives, an extensive process to address institutionalized racism and colonialism inside the organization, and the launch of a novel subscription program.

"We believe that Canadian Stage has a responsibility to step up as a leader in our sector during this crisis," says Artistic Director Brendan Healy. "Over the past five months, we have closely listened to the needs of artists, consulted with our audience and engaged members of our local community to help us determine our organizational priorities for the upcoming year. We have heard the clarion call for artistic innovation and institutional transformation. This plan brings support to artists, inspiration to audiences, solace to communities, and new ideas to the sector. And, perhaps most importantly, it brings hope for the future."

This announcement comes hot on the heels of a very busy summer for Canadian Stage which saw the company work with 118 individual artists on 21 new pieces since the beginning of the pandemic, ranging from audio plays to multi-disciplinary performances.

SAFETY FIRST & CANCELLATIONS

As we respond to the continued efforts to fight the spread of the pandemic, and to ensure the safety of our artists, audiences and employees, Canadian Stage regrettably announces the suspension of the winter and spring productions. These are: *Public Enemy* by Olivier Choinière (a Canadian Stage production in association with L'Activité), *Miigis* by Red Sky Performance (a Red Sky Performance production presented by Canadian Stage), *Crazy Camel* by Akaji Maro and Dairakudakan (a Dairakudakan production co-presented by Canadian Stage and TO Live), *Revisor* by Crystal Pite and Jonathon Young (a Kidd Pivot production co-presented by Canadian Stage and TO Live), and *Paradise Lost* by Erin Shields (a Canadian Stage production). These suspensions are in addition to the previously announced suspension of Canadian Stage's originally planned fall productions.

A BLUEPRINT FOR THE CONTINUANCE OF CONTEMPORARY LIVE PERFORMANCE

Canadian Stage has established three streams of activities to respond to the challenges, impacts, and opportunities of the pandemic.



The first stream – **INVEST** – will see significant funds being made available to help theatre and dance makers pivot their artistic practice during the pandemic and beyond. This stream involves microgrants to support artist-led investigations into new technologies and performance modalities and scholarships for technicians and designers wishing to upgrade their digital skills.

"Canadian Stage will provide individual creators, performers and practitioners with the tools and the time that they deserve to deeply investigate their own practice, to delve into their artistic questions, and to learn the tools that they may need to pivot in this new reality," says Associate Artistic Director Mel Hague. "We believe that any significant change and innovation in our ecology will come from our artists, and so institutions must invest deeply in their time, questioning, collaboration and contemplation. It will be artists who will lead us in understanding, questioning, and building a new collective future."

The second stream - **EXPLORE** – provides more extensive support to rigorous investigations into new forms of live performance. This stream involves two robust Artist Residency Programs that place artists at the forefront of new technologies and virtual reality. It also includes commissions and workshops of new works. Among these projects will be the workshop of a new digital adaption of Olivier Choinière's play *Public Enemy*, originally slated for production in January 2021. This adaption will see Choinière go beyond simply capturing his play on camera.

"When we attend a play in a theatre, we observe the action on stage from a distance," says Choinière. "The digital adaptation of *Public Enemy* essentially aims to place the audience at the heart of the theatrical experience. It will do so by putting the spectator in the position of the actor performing the play on stage, precisely when he/she embodies the figure of the public enemy."

By providing space and support for artists to explore and fully integrate technology into their work, Canadian Stage continues to encourage the pursuit of excellence and ambition in its artist.

The third stream - **ENGAGE** – brings unique experiences to audiences. This stream involves outdoor performances, digital experiences, festivals , and public think tanks about the future of the performing arts. Among these projects will be a special year-long residency of the celebrated New York City-based company 600 Highwaymen. Last seen in Toronto with *The Fever* at the 2018 Luminato Festival, 600 Highwaymen members Abigail Browde and Michael Silverstone will be sharing 3 news works over the next 9 months that are responses to the social impact of the pandemic.

"We're tremendously excited at the opportunity to be bringing our newest work, *A Thousand Ways*, to Toronto audiences," says Abigail Browde and Michael Silverstone. "The piece calls for a different kind of spectator, one that will take actions on the piece and become a co-creator with and for someone else. We've long admired the work of Canadian Stage - we are continually inspired by their boundary-less and courageous approach to live art - and we feel this project could not be happening in a better home."

A CLEAR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY BUILDING

In addition to these three streams, Canadian Stage will be increasing its commitment to fostering community strength and resilience. It is excited to announce a new strategic partnership with Jamii, a community-based arts organization in the St Lawrence Neighborhood. Over the past two years, Canadian Stage and Jamii have been working together on ad hoc projects, including the creation of the short film *Unlocked* this past summer. This award-winning film details the impact of the lockdown on 11 community members along The Esplanade. Canadian Stage is pleased to be expanding its support of this important arts organization through the provision of additional resources, staffing, and space.

"We are both thrilled and grateful for this partnership which will focus on enhancing social cohesion through the arts in the Esplanade neighbourhood," says Jamii Founder, Executive & Artistic Director Isorine Marc." Joining forces will not only reinforce Canadian Stage's connection and commitment to its physical community, but it will also contribute to building Jamii's programming capacity. Since March, and in addition to "Unlocked", Jamii and Canadian Stage have partnered to bring itinerant performances through the Kisanii Hub, treating hundreds of "Esplanadians" to live arts. We can't wait to see the artistic experiences and collaborations that will be born out of this beautiful, unique and inspiring model of strategic partnership."

INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Canadian Stage is investing substantial resources into a comprehensive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion review and implementation plan for the organization. This was identified as a cornerstone of the company's strategic plan, adopted in October 2019, and the urgency and importance for this work has further increased in recent months. Canadian Stage is working with Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Oppression Educator, Multi-disciplinary Artist, Organizer and Consultant, Rania El Mugammar over a three-year period which include a fulsome audit of the organization's policies and practices, the development of an implementation plan to evolve Canadian Stage into an anti-racist organization, and the establishment of a permanent Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee within the organization.

“As a contemporary performing arts organization, we ask audiences to reflect on themselves, society and the future they want to create,” says Canadian Stage Board Chair Alexandra Baillie. “We must do the same. Canadian Stage’s commitment to applying an anti-racist lens throughout the organization is fundamental to the strong and vibrant future we embrace.”

SUBSCRIBER PROGRAM

With a new season, comes a new participation model. Canadian Stage is pleased to announce the SubscriberPlus Pass (starting at \$95). This flexible all-access program allows patrons to choose the experiences that best suit them. Benefits include access to all digital events, discounts on additional tickets, first access to programs as they are announced, invitations to behind-the-scenes events, and more.

Most SubscriberPlus Passes include Artist Vouchers, tax receiptable financial contributions that will be 100% directed to artists through the CS Microgranting program.

“Since the onset of COVID-19, we have connected with many of our incredible audiences,” says Canadian Stage Executive Director Monica Esteves. “We wanted to listen and learn about how our audiences were navigating the pandemic and how Canadian Stage could best continue to be an essential part of their lives. Their feedback was incredibly helpful and directly informed our new SubscriberPlus Pass. From our focus groups, we also heard – loud and clear – that our audiences were worried for Canadian culture and its artists – and wanted to help. Our Artist Vouchers provide that opportunity for our audiences to directly fund microgranting to artists, their projects, professional development and their livelihoods. This new approach is a radical departure from the traditional transactional relationship between theatres and theatregoers....and we hope all of our audiences join us during this extraordinary journey.”

REIMAGINED 20.21 SEASON: FALL 2020 EDITION

Please note that Canadian Stage’s programming and activities will be released on a quarterly basis: Fall (September-December), Winter (January-March) and Spring (April-June).

From a return to High Park, to a dive into the imagination of one of the world’s most celebrated living authors, and an interactive theatre encounter that begins with a phone call, Canadian Stage’s Fall season offers a mix of outdoor, digital and analogue events.

TIME FOR TIME (September 17 at 6 PM, September 18 at 1 PM, September 19 at 8 AM) A Compagnie Marie Chouinard Production presented by Canadian Stage

Canadian Stage welcomes back legendary choreographer Marie Chouinard with the world of premiere of *Time for Time*. Happening live over Zoom, this interactive project features a series of spontaneous dance creations that take their inspiration from a secret or a heartfelt wish that someone in the audience shares with the performer.

DANCE IN HIGH PARK (September 26 – October 11) Presented by Canadian Stage

Over three weekends, the High Park Amphitheatre comes to life with dance. Audiences are invited to experience some of Toronto’s most gifted and imaginative dancers as they grace our stage in one of the city’s most majestic parks. These one-act, family-friendly, physically distanced performances will adhere to up-to-date safety protocols regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. All High Park performances are pay-what-you-can but require a reservation.

WEEK 1: *Solo in High Park* (September 26-27 at 2 PM) Co-curated by Seika Boye & Timea Wharton-Suri

Hosted by Nicole Inica Hamilton of Turn Out Radio, this program features solos by Travis Knights, Carmen Romero, Raoul Pillay, and Alyssa Martin/Rock Bottom Movement (featuring Sam Grist) in a range of dance styles: tap, flamenco, house, and contemporary. Audiences will be treated to entertaining performances by dancers who reveal the precision, depth and significance of their craft and the importance of the audience to the art they make.

WEEK 2: *Dusk Dances in High Park* (October 2-3 at 2 PM)

Dusk Dances is an outdoor dance festival that brings high quality dance to public parks. For this presentation, the company will feature three unparalleled choreographers.

WEEK 3: *Red Sky in High Park* (October 9 at 5:30 PM, October 10 at 1 & 4 PM, October 11 at 1 PM)

Celebrated for its powerful transformational experiences that elevate the ecology of Indigenous arts and culture, internationally renowned, Dora Award-winning, Red Sky Performance returns to Canadian Stage with cutting-edge dance creations from the company's acclaimed repertoire.

THE ELEMENTS OF STORY: KHALED HOSSEINI'S *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (October 5-November 13) Co-produced by Canadian Stage and the Toronto International Festival of Authors In Association with Diaspora Dialogues

The Elements of Story delves into the work and ideas of internationally celebrated authors and cultural thinkers. This Fall, participants will embark on a six-week exploration into Khaled Hosseini's captivating bestselling novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Hosted by the winner of the 2020 Canada Reads competition, Samra Habib (*We Have Always Been Here: A Queer Muslim Memoir*), this one-of-a-kind series of interactive discussions and lectures will allow readers to deepen their experience and understanding of the novel and its author through a look into Afghanistan's complex intersection of politics, religion, and gender.

This online program includes access to:

- A live ***In Conversation with Khaled Hosseini*** event (Friday November 13, 7pm)
- ***In Their Element***: three 90-minute lectures by leading scholars, thinkers, and artists exploring related topics.
 - Mozhdah Jamalzadah: acclaimed Afghan singer and talk show host, dubbed "the Oprah of Afghanistan" (Tuesday October 6, 7pm)
 - Dr. Kamal Al-Solaylee: celebrated author and journalist (Tuesday October 20, 7pm)
 - The third guest will be announcement soon (Tuesday November 3, 7pm)
- ***The Elements of Story Book Club***: three facilitated 90minute group discussions (Thursdays October 15, 29, and November 12, 7pm)

In addition, participants will have exclusive access to a series of micro-film poems by Afghan and Canadian filmmakers commissioned especially for this unique event, produced by Golden Hour Productions.

**A THOUSAND WAYS (November 4) Presented by Canadian Stage
Written & Created by Abigail Browde & Michael Silverstone (600 HIGHWAYMEN)**

Canadian Stage is thrilled to announce that New York City-based, Obie Award-winning, 600 Highwaymen will be a Company-in-Residence over the 20.21 season. *A Thousand Ways* is a live,

interactive three-part theatre experience that will take place over several months. Part 1, *ISOLATION*, will occur this Fall and will involve two audience members – both strangers – who use a carefully crafted set of directives relayed over a phone call to take a journey together over the course of an hour.

Details for parts 2 (*RE-ENTRY*) and 3 (*CONGREGATION*) of the triptych will be shared as part of our Winter and Spring announcements.

FESTIVAL OF IDEAS AND CREATION (November 30-December 4) Presented by Canadian Stage

Over the course of the next nine months, Canadian Stage will present three mini-festivals about the future of live art. Through interactive sharing, workshops, masterclasses and discussions, the festival will examine how the pandemic is shaping interdisciplinarity, scale, interculturalism, internationalism, new performance modalities, institutional transformation, the role of the artist in society, and much more. Event schedule and details will be announced in late October.

EXPLORE AND INVESTMENT:

Canadian Stage will foster artistic innovation and support artist development through a unique set of granting and residency opportunities. The following opportunities will aide professional artists in investigation of their practice, with a focus on process, learning, collaboration, and deep thinking.

CS Microgrants

(applications open September 15; applications due October 23 at midnight)

Canadian Stage will provide funding to artists for the development of project specific or research specific creative work over the course of the 20.21 season. These microgrants will be given to live performance creators, artists, choreographers, or makers to investigate a specific creation project. Canadian Stage is particularly interested in supporting proposals that fall into the following four areas of investigation: anti-oppressive/anti-colonial artistic practices, new forms of collaboration, intersections with community, and new technologies.

OAC Recommender Grants for Theatre Creators

(applications open September 8; applications close December 4)

Canadian Stage is proud to once again be a participating recommender in the Ontario Arts Council's Recommender Grants for Theatre Creators. We will be accepting applications for creators primarily based in Ontario, with a focus on new creations which are multi-disciplinary in form or subject matter and/or are highly innovative in form, use of media, style or subject matter.

CS Scholarships for Skills Development for Designers, Stage Managers, and Technicians

(applications open September 16; applications due November 13 at midnight)

Established in partnership with Native Earth Performing Arts and Theatre Gargantua, this scholarship will fund training (up to \$2,000) for professional technicians, stage managers, and designers wishing to upgrade their skills or acquire new skills to more effectively engage in new practices in live performance.

BMO Lab Residency Program (in collaboration with the University of Toronto)

(applications are open now; applications due September 4 at midnight)

A unique paid opportunity that will embed two professional artists with a live performance practice and an interest in creation and emergent technologies in a graduate-level, interdisciplinary course at the BMO Lab at the University of Toronto. The aim of this residency is to provide the artists with

access to an educational space experimenting in the application of technology to live performance, and to work deeply with both the students and course facilitators on the practical creation of new experiments in performance.

CS Virtual Reality Technology Residency

(applications open and close dates TBD)

Led by award-winning theatre creator and designer Beth Kates, two artists will participate in a three-week intensive exploring Virtual Reality technology and the applications of this technology for live performance. Participants will receive an honorarium for participation and will be loaned an Oculus Quest VR system to learn and discover within the virtual landscape. This practical-based curriculum allows artists with an interest in emergent technology to investigate its creative capacity and application to their own artistic practice.

“Compelling theatre is the result of the ephemeral magic and alchemy of people, design and story,” says Beth Kates. “The combination of Virtual Reality technology and live performance opens the doors of physics, time, place, embodiment and reality—expanding our capacities for storytelling and pushing our existing boundaries of what we believe theatre to ‘be’. By engaging with this emerging technology, participating artists have the opportunity to expand their imaginations in ways that will impact their practice and the work we all create going forward. As we continue to live in this ‘distancing’ era, VR offers a magical range of ways to create, perform, and experience together.”

RBC Emerging Artists Program

(applications open date TBD; applications close December 31 at midnight)

The RBC Emerging Artist Program encourages emerging artists to deeply engage with their own creative processes in a supportive and rigorous environment. The 20.21 program will focus on collective and collaborative creation processes. This year, Canadian Stage will invite one Toronto-based collective to work towards developing a specific project.

ABOUT CANADIAN STAGE

Canadian Stage's mission is to be the leading contemporary performing arts organization in the country. A collision of disciplines and cultures, Canadian Stage reflects the dynamism and complexity of Canada and is a vital artistic force locally, nationally, and internationally. In its over thirty-year history, Canadian Stage has employed thousands of artists and developed and produced hundreds of new productions. Many of the plays developed by Canadian Stage have been awarded and nominated for Canada's most prestigious literary and performing arts honours, including Governor General's, Chalmers and Dora Mavor Moore Awards. Throughout the theatre season, nearly 100,000 patrons attend performances and workshops in our three Toronto venues. Throughout our history, Canadian Stage has provided outstanding education and outreach programs cultivating a diverse audience demographic.

**To receive further information, please contact
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